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SOMETIMES INITIATIVE CAN HURT

By Cpl. Eric Furniss

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER, Twentynine Palms, Calif. (Aug 28) -- Marines often worry that they won't receive their mail while aboard the Combat Center for Combined Arms Exercise, on deployment to Japan or on Temporary Assigned Duty. However, by taking the initiative to temporarily change their address, they may do themselves and the Corps harm, according to Sgt. Adrian Powell, postal clerk with MCAGCC's Military Post Office.

"People try to take the initiative," Powell said. "They change their address so they'll get their bills and so on. It seems smart, but people don't understand how [military] mail works."

Powell explained when a Marine from, let's say Camp Lejeune, comes here for CAX, the post office at Camp Lejeune knows that Marine and unit is going to be aboard MCAGCC. The post office at Camp Lejeune simply re-labels the mail bags and reroutes them here.

Powell said people often try to change the address for the month they'll be here for CAX, but use the wrong address.

"If you are on CAX and put the wrong address, we have to return to sender," Powell said. "We try to be customer oriented, but we can't use the locator to track everyone who uses a wrong address."

Some Marines will have their mail sent to Twentynine Palms, but forget to change the address back, Powell added. During a recent CAX, the MCAGCC Military Post Office had a postal clerk from Camp Lejeune to assist in locating Marines who had wrong addresses, but that clerk left with the CAX, Powell said.

"When Marines don't change their address back and we keep getting their mail, we don't have anyone from Camp Lejeune anymore to help locate what unit they're with," Powell said.

According to Powell, Marines set to take part in a unit deployment cycle shouldn't change their address either. The system works the same way. Their mail comes to the MCAGCC Military Post Office, and the clerks change the labels and reroute it to where the unit is deployed.

"It usually takes 7-10 days total for mail to reach overseas," Powell said. "That's pretty fast."

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So, Marines taking matters into their own hands, thinking they will speed up the process with a little misguided initiative should take Powell's advice: Don't do it. Leave it to the professionals.

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